

Managing Holiday Stress



Holidays are often a joyful time of year, but they can also be a time of competing demands and long to-do lists that lead to high stress levels and unhealthy coping. The best way to conquer holiday stress and ensure that your holidays are truly a joyful and positive time for all, is to plan for how you will manage your stress in a positive way. The following are seven practical tips for how best to manage holiday stress and stay relaxed during the upcoming season:

1 Be Realistic- Let go of trying to make everything perfect. Be flexible and open to changing things up. Traditions are great, but sometimes it is necessary to modify traditions to reduce conflict and keep stress levels low. Be realistic with expectations of yourself and others and instead of focusing on what could or should be focus on what is.

2 Stick to a budget- Before you start gift or food shopping decide

how much money you can afford to spend and stick to your budget. If money is tight this year try making a homemade gift or donating to a charity in someone else's name. Sometimes handmade gifts are for more special than store bought ones.

3 Acknowledge Your Feelings- The holidays can be particularly difficult if you have recently experienced the loss of a loved one or cannot be with your family during the holidays. Feeling sad, disappointed, and lonely are normal emotions to feel. Give yourself permission to feel these emotions and if you need to talk try to reach out to someone nearby; such as a friend, a spiritual organization, or a counselor.

4 Plan ahead- Make a to do list and don't wait until the last minute to get everything done. If you need to, delegate tasks to family members. Think about what you can achieve ahead of time and set weekly goals to get tasks done.

5 Learn to say "No"- Saying yes to everything may lead you to feel overwhelmed and stressed to the max. Be realistic with how much you take on during the holidays,

and learn to say no to family and friends when it gets to be too much.

6 Keep healthy habits and avoid unhealthy ones- No matter how busy you are during the holiday season don't put healthy habits on hold. Continue to eat healthy, limit caffeine and sugary foods, exercise regularly, and be sure to get plenty of sleep. Avoid unhealthy coping strategies such as alcohol, drugs, or fatty foods.

7 Practice relaxation time- Try to set aside time each day to do something relaxing and just unplug from the holiday stress. Try reading a good book, taking a hot bath, talking a walk or run, playing an instrument or listening to music. Identify which relaxation techniques work best for you and challenge yourself to practice them daily.

To learn more about this topic or to schedule an individual appointment, please contact the EAP Coordinator at 301-619-4657

